



## 2021 IN OSCEOLA COUNTY

Iowa State University Extension and Outreach connects the needs of Iowans with Iowa State research and resources. We listen, learn, and work with the people of Osceola County for a #STRONGIOWA.



**Sustainable  
ENVIRONMENTS**



**Thriving  
COMMUNITIES**



**Resilient  
PEOPLE**



**Future  
LEADERS**



### Serving the People of Osceola County

As Iowans adjusted to life during the COVID-19 pandemic, ISU Extension and Outreach continued to prioritize health and safety as we delivered research-based education to the people of Osceola County. During 2021 we focused on the following efforts.

#### Relocating Our Office to a More Accessible and Community-Oriented Location in Sibley

Early in 2021, we were made aware that the current ISU Extension and Outreach Osceola County rented office space would no longer be available to us, so staff and extension council members began the search for a new location to support our staff and programs.

A prime location right at the end of Main Street in Sibley was eventually agreed upon, and after some minor renovations, staff were able to begin the move in early-Summer.

The space, which was previously a bank building, now houses two community partners - ISU Extension and Outreach Osceola County and the City of Sibley. The location allows for more community visibility and involvement, and many clients have commented that it is in a much more convenient location than our previous office. After the busyness of county fair subsided, staff also worked on branding the building and ensuring that all residents could clearly locate the office and our resources.

The Osceola County Extension Council has been elected by the people of the county to guide local educational programming by partnering with extension staff. From needs assessment through program implementation and evaluation of outcomes, the council represents you and your issues. We are always serving Iowans and we are here for you. Now. Always.

***Thank you for your support.***

**Taylor Hibbing**

*Extension Council Chair*

**Thomas Croatt**

*Council Member*

**Lindsey Helmers**

*Council Member*

**Matt Jurgens**

*Council Member*

**Becky Krogman**

*Council Member*

**Kim McDougall**

*Council Member*

**Justin Nasers**

*Council Member*

**Tracy Van Diepen**

*Council Member*

**Angie Van Gelder**

*Council Member*

## New Osceola County Youth Coordinator: Jill Berkland

Iowa State University Extension and Outreach Osceola County welcomed a new staff member in mid-September. Osceola County 4-H Alum Jill Berkland began as the new Osceola County Youth Coordinator.

Berkland will be coordinating the Osceola County 4-H and Youth Development program. In this role, she will work with 4-H members, club leaders, parents, and volunteers, as well as partnering with the local school and community organizations.

Berkland is an Osceola County native, having grown up in the county and graduating from Sibley-Ocheyedan High School in 2017. She received her bachelor's degree in Animal Science from Iowa State University in the Fall of 2020.

She is most excited that her role enables her to help kids get involved in 4-H and find their niche in life.

"4-H allows kids to get involved in anything that interests them," Berkland said. "I was interested in this position because 4-H and the previous county youth coordinator Ashley Peters had such an enormously positive impact on not only me, but other youth as well. I want to be able to have a positive impact on the youth in this county."



## Developing Strong Community Leaders Through the Leading Communities Program

ISU Extension and Outreach's Leading Communities program helps develop effective local leaders, encourages mutual respect and trust among citizens, and promotes a good quality of life in local communities. The six-session series was designed to maximize the strengths and skills of current and future community leaders.

Seeing great value in the program, the Osceola County Extension Council made the investment to bring Leading Communities to Osceola County, and through coordination by county staff, 20 local community members completed the leadership development program in 2021.

The program strives to develop community leaders of all kinds. Leading Communities was an opportunity for local community members interested in leadership to gain tools, skills, and confidence to help chart Osceola County's future.

## Providing Traditional Agriculture Programming in New and Different Ways

As COVID-19 continued to affect the area, we developed new ways to provide traditional pesticide, manure management and crop education trainings. Early in the year, Osceola County pesticide and manure management applicators attended in-person trainings, with several others taking advantage of the option to complete the required training virtually or individually at our office. As the year went on, we also promoted ISU's online agronomy education series, CropsTV, and looked for ways to further support the agriculture industry in completing their required trainings and gaining continuing education.

## Offering Quality Youth Summer Programs and Showcasing 4-H at the County Fair

Following a year off from in-person summer camps due to COVID-19 restrictions, families in Osceola County were excited for the opportunity to return to a summer filled with normal youth development camps and 4-H programming in 2021.

Beginning in June and continuing through August, youth attended camps throughout Osceola County. These camp participants dove into hands-on, innovative adventures in the areas of science, technology, engineering, math (STEM), robotics, literature, cooking and the arts. Youth participants developed new skills and a diverse knowledgebase. Some examples include: food safety, safe kitchen skills, coding, Origami, meat science, video filming and editing, drone piloting, herb gardening and sewing, to name a few.

In addition to in-person summer camps, staff also offered nine different Clover Crates for youth who were unable or uncomfortable attending programs in person. Reaching all audiences is an important component of the Osceola County Youth Development program and this allowed us to do so.

In addition to summer camps and Clover Crates, the Osceola County Fair returned in 2021, providing the opportunity for youth to demonstrate what they have learned through their 4-H project work over the past year.

Youth and families were extremely excited to return to the Osceola County Fair and support the local 4-H and FFA members. The fair saw 116 4-H and FFA members exhibit 581 livestock and 89 non-livestock projects. From the 4-H Barbecue kick-off event, to the Egg and Spoon event at the horse games, to the finale ribbon auction, there was a sense of enjoyment, community support and a love for the 4-H program.



*Top Left:* Blake Schmidt works to code Dash the Robot at the "Dash & Dot Visit the County Fair" summer camp.

*Top Right:* Ellisyn Gerloff creates her own masterpiece at one of the art-focused summer camps in Sibley.

*Middle:* Brooke Krogman lunges forward during a timed event at the Osceola County Fair Horse Games.

*Bottom Left:* Sam Chambers speaks with the poultry judge as his chicken gets examined during the Osceola County Fair.

*Bottom Right:* Lindy Tracy takes her dog through a variety of obedience commands during the Osceola County Fair Dog Show.

## Working toward Recovery

As our state works toward recovery, ISU Extension and Outreach Osceola County has been engaging Iowans in addressing mental health and supporting efforts to increase access to quality child care.

Long-time staff have completed “Question. Persuade. Refer” suicide prevention training, as well as “Mental Health First Aid.” We always provide Iowa Concern Hotline cards to all program participants, no matter the program content. This ensures that all helplines are available and readily accessible to all community members.

Additionally, we strive to promote online child care provider training resources and the Science of Parenting podcast, while communicating with local child care providers frequently to get a feel for their current needs. This past year, we worked hard to develop a contact group including both licensed and non-licensed child care centers so we can easily send them resources and keep them current with any new materials or programs from ISU Extension and Outreach or one of our partners.

Looking ahead to 2022, ISU Extension and Outreach Osceola County will continue to focus on supporting efforts to engage Iowans in addressing mental health and increasing access to quality child care within Osceola County, Northwest Iowa and the state as a whole.

Osceola County will be one of six launching pads in Iowa to utilize a new mental health wellness federal grant.

The Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship (IDALS) is partnering with ISU Extension and Outreach to help raise awareness about mental health and wellness resources and help make them more accessible to farmers and rural communities.

Through this grant, extension staff will offer community outreach and programming to individuals involved in agriculture and those who support them. We will promote programs focused on strengthening families. Additionally, farmer resource packets will be available with information on how to access stress assistance, wellness, and family finance programming.

Frequent conversations will continue with local child care providers. Working in partnership with the local Child Care Resource & Referral (CCR&R), we want to be certain that we are providing all that we can to make operating child care facilities in Osceola County manageable and appealing. We will continue to promote programs and resources, such as “The Science of Parenting” podcast and child care provider trainings frequently throughout the year, and will be listening for additional needs voiced by our community partners.

### Extension Staff



**Cheryl Heronemus**  
*Regional Director*



**Sandy Lamfers**  
*Office Assistant*



**Jill Berkland**  
*County Youth Coordinator*



**Sue Boettcher**  
*Human Sciences Program Coordinator*



**Kiley Biedenfeld**  
*Marketing Coordinator*

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